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TESTIMONY

Ladies and gentlemen of the State Board of Education: Good afternoon. My name is Madison Gilfert, and I am a gifted student in the fifth grade at Hartford Upper Elementary School in Mt. Laurel. Today, it is my honor to address the Board of Education. I am here to inform you about the benefits of educational programs for gifted students and to request your help in funding these programs. I hope that this perspective will encourage you to place someone at the Department Of Education to oversee the growth of these programs.

The State of New Jersey distributes billions of dollars to schools statewide. It is my understanding that none of this money is dedicated to gifted education. I would like for that to change.

I am extremely fortunate to have a gifted program (a.k.a. G.A.P.) in my school district. The reason why I have G.A.P. in my district is because Mt. Laurel's real estate taxes are high, and we use some of that money to fund G.A.P. Ever since kindergarten, I've been given advanced and challenging work so I was not bored or frustrated with the standard curriculum. The advanced curriculum for gifted students allowed me to work and learn at my higher level of ability.

Many other gifted children in the Garden State attend schools without such programs. It is truly unfortunate that they don't have the same type of opportunities that I have been offered. The tremendous projects and activities we do in G.A.P. are endless!

From third grade on, G.A.P. students do what is called an "Independent Study." We select a topic of our choice, then do an in depth research project on that topic. Later, we create a visual display to demonstrate what our oral presentation is about. Our visual displays could be a model, a Power Point Presentation, or any other setup. This year, my Independent Study was on the Golden Gate Bridge. I used a Power Point Presentation as my display. Throughout the entire project, we are assisted with our work by a Highly Qualified Teacher who has had special training to teach gifted students. Other states nationwide require that teachers for gifted programs get special training in this field. New Jersey does not have these requirements. However, I believe that we should.

We also study as a class. For example: This year in my G.A.P. class, we have learned about architecture. One of our assignments was to photograph different architectural styles in the real world. We also took a field trip to Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania to see some of the city's architectural aspects. We are presently studying the brain, and will continue into our humor unit. Last year, one of our units was on taste. We did a taste test in class, and a survey including our friends and family at home.

These exhilarating activities are the advantageous results of specialized funding and planning by teachers who are trained to work with gifted students. Thousands of other gifted children in New Jersey are deprived of these fantastic programs. *You* are the only people who have the power to resolve this pressing problem. You can make a difference by establishing a staff position at the Department Of Education to oversee gifted programs. I hope you decide to do just that. Thank you.